

VIRGINIA,
OR
THE FALL OF THE DECEMVIRS,

A TRAGEDY.

BY
JOHN BIDLAKE, B.A. *K*

CHAPLAIN TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF
CLARENCE, AND MASTER OF THE GRAMMAR
SCHOOL, PLYMOUTH.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

APPIUS, *the Decemvir.*

VIRGINIUS, *a Centurion, and Father of Virginia.*

CLAUDIUS, *Client of Appius.*

ICILIUS, *Lover of Virginia, and late Tribune.*

NUMITOR, *Brother of Virginus.*

PUBLIUS, *Son of Numitor.*

LUCIUS, *Brother of Icilius.*

VALERIUS, }
HORATIUS, } *Opponents of Appius.*

VIRGINIA, *Daughter of Virginus.*

Lictors, Guards, &c.



VIRGINIA,
OR
THE FALL OF THE DECENVIRS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A STREET IN ROME.

PUBLIUS and VALERIUS meeting LUCIUS.

Publius.

Good morrow, Lucius! where speed'st thou with the dawn,

That cloth'd in sober grey, now steals o'er heav'n?

Luc. I seek the Campus Martius, to indulge
In sports, ere warmer hours shall make them toilsome.

Pub. And thither too I tend; but I, alas!
For exercise feel not accordant spirits,
Since things are grown so out of course. Our Rome
Is full of prodigies: last night in air
Fierce hostile shapes appear'd, and marshal'd troops,
Gleaming in blood, and waging fiery war!
The citizens, who view'd, stood all aghast.

Val. Lucius relates of portents full of terror.
Speak, my good youth, for only friends are here.

Luc. Late to the Capitol a wolf pursu'd
His course, and sought the image of the god;
Which frown'd, and shook down to its trembling base.
Within his temple Mars, where worshippers
Ador'd, thrice rais'd his spear in dreadful menace.
Untimely births and various omens threaten.
May all the gods defend our sacred city!

Pub. From war abroad, and from our civic feuds!

Luc. There is the fatal cause, our civic feuds.
But Dis-content must hold its peace, and pine
In secret, since it dares not speak its griefs.

Pub. Oppression awes: against the people's will
The proud Decemvirs now maintain themselves.
So tempting delegated power to man!
This the third year of tyranny usurp'd;
And now they throw the useless mask aside.

Val. You know, my friends, what changes Rome has
seen;

When Tarquin was expell'd, we hop'd for freedom:
Awhile the Consuls reign'd. How weak were we
To suffer ten to hold all pow'r themselves!
These are Decemvirs, spoiling us poor doves;
Like fraudful kites, of whom the fable warns.
Let men beware of fickle change, nor trust
With tempting pow'r the faithless sons of promise.

Luc. A battle with the Æqui too draws near.
Our army is encamp'd at Algidum,
Where they already wait th' approaching foe.
When does the brave Virginus join the troops?

Pub. This very morn: while we are tamely kept
At home, and waste, unknown, inglorious youth.
That thought tortures the ardour of my soul.

Luc. Ah! should occasion offer, I would shew
My Publius what Roman youths dare do.

Pub. And I; for hostile fields are better far
Than vacant and inglorious ease.

Val. External foes press on our civil discords;
The Sabines rise, the Æqui too invade.
Ah! hapless is the country torn by faction!
A foreign war, though pregnant with all evil,

Carries not half the ills intestine feud
Within its mischief-teeming womb engenders:
For civil discord is the fellest woe
Of miserable man. Internal peace,
Like heav'nly music, tunes the moral soul,
And all to harmony attempers life.

Pub. But let us hence, good youth, ere day advance,
For exercise suits not with sultry hours.

Luc. I will attend thy steps. Lead on, I pray,
For see, the ruddy sun advances fast,
And sheds his broader beams athwart the plains.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

THE GARDEN OF APPIUS.

Enter CLAUDIUS, and NUMA a Slave.

Clau. Thou say'st thy lord is here retir'd.

Slave.

He is;

And ere the dawning day appear'd set forth,
Leaving his early couch disturb'd, while gloom
Sat frowning on his brow, and musing sad,
He sought the deep recess of solitude.

Clau. Go to the house; I will await his coming.

[*Exit Slave.*

How sweetly breathes the freshness of the morn,
That from its eastern throne in golden state
Now throws a flood of lustre round, and wakes
The voice of melody in every grove,
Each fragrant dale, and dew-bespangled plain!
What should this earnest message mean? It speaks
Some weighty cause. But Appius now approaches.

Enter APPIUS (*musings*).

Good day, Decemvir! thou wak'st with early morn.

App. The busy mind, good Claudius, kills our sleep,

And rest will hold no fellowship with pain.
'Tis cheerfulness or vigorous health that make
Our pillows soft: to care it is a bed
Of thorns. The day looks bright, and gladness smiles
At its approach; yet I can feel no joy,
Though nature does. My soul is dull, and like
The rugged rocks that crown yon mountain's brow,
Insensible to all the rays that gild it.

Clau. Who shall have cause for exultation more
Than thou? Does not each happy circumstance
Combine of pow'r, of eminence, and fame,
To elevate thy mind? Who shall be pleas'd
If those are not whom all obey?

App. Ah, Claudius! would 'twere so. But thou dost
judge,

Alas! of things from the mere outward seeming.
The surface of the stream is often smooth,
And glows with heaven's own colours; yet 'tis death
To those who trust its smiles, nor heed the rocks
That lurk with treach'rous secresy below.
Yon clouds look rich and gorgeous, though but vapours.

Clau. Then all the pride of life is mere delusion?

App. Why nearly so. Thus thou esteem'st me blest;
Thou seest my colleagues bending to my will;
Thou know'st how senates court me, and expect
My wish, that they may frame it to a law:
Thou seest how adulation fawns, and pride
Before me stoops; thou hear'st the noisy shouts
Of the inconstant populace; thou know'st
My high descent, my power within the senate,
And hence thou call'st me blest.

Clau. So thou shouldst seem.

App. Then trust not greatness, truly 'tis fallacious;
For I have that within which gives distraction;
All ease to pain, all sweet to bitter turns.
Not all the purple pomp of life can charm
The aching tooth; and e'en a little dust
Within the eye philosophy defeats:
A single want makes opulence quite poor.
Devoid of one fond wish, I nothing taste:

Then greatness is a state of constant peril;
A fragile surface, where we smoothly slide,
An inch remov'd from death, that lurks below;
And the first changing breath of air dissolves
The brittle ice on which our folly trusts.

Clau. Then say what cause makes noble Appius sad?
That Claudius may relieve his present pain,
Or perish in th' attempt to give him ease.

App. 'Twas that induc'd me to intreat thy counsel.
I will unbosom all my pain. Tell me
If thou art firmly faithful, Claudius?

Clau. And canst thou e'er
Doubt that? Ever devoted have I been
To thee. My all, nay more, my life itself
Is due to thee. Hast thou not prov'd me true?

App. Enough of this; I will not doubt. Then hear,
And be thou, Claudius, dumb.

Clau. My tongue, nay more,
My heart is ever thine.

App. Then learn; the cause
That drives out reason from its seat is love.

Clau. Is Appius then the sport of mean desires?
Is cautious wisdom thus o'ercome by weakness?

App. Love, Claudius, is a secret fire that lurks
In every breast.—A latent principle,
Dormant like heat, till by collision waken'd,
That from a little spark bursts into flame.
Can wisdom check the all-devouring fire?
Then it may curb the force of headstrong passion.
Art may direct the river's smoother course,
But cannot stop th' o'erbounding torrent's rage.

Clau. What then avail the lessons of the wise,
The golden records treasur'd up by time, which lift
The tutor'd mind above the reign of sense?

App. Alas! 'tis easy in the cool retreat,
Where passions ne'er invade, to talk by rule:
Then reason sits secure, free from temptation.
Cowards may talk of distant danger boldly,
And victories be won o'er fancied foes.
Nor seems it hard to bear the winter's cold

In sultry summer's day. But to preserve
Our virtue spotless in tumultuous scenes
Is the great task which few can reach: for know
Of wisdom's outline practice is the body.
This is the comment on philosophy,
Which makes unpractis'd teachers blush; and here
The wise man's wisdom fails, and good man's strength.

Clau. But would not such a victory be worth
Th' attempt of noble Appius? May not his fame
Be spoilt by weak pursuits or wanton dalliance?

App. I must not hear, for now it is too late.
And, Claudius, know thy friend is lost! to all
But passion lost. Virginia's beauty lights
A flame within that burns this tortur'd breast.

Clau. Forgive again, if zeal for thee offend.
O gods! she is beneath thy noble aim.
What, a plebeian maid? O low pursuit!
The lordly lion sports not with the lamb:
Patrician blood should join no vulgar streams.

App. I thought so once; but here my pride must yield,
And, like a flow'r full blown, I bow.
Love laughs at all distinctions made by men,
And works as nature does; the proud pulls down,
And lifts the low; frustrates the schemes of craft,
Confounds the wise, turns right to wrong, and makes
All other laws subservient to its own.

Clau. But is there not in force a late decree
'Gainst marriage of Patricians with the People?
That obstacle will stand right in our way:
That law too fram'd by thee I understand.

App. And therefore shall by me be disannull'd.

Clau. Perhaps 'twere hard to make the senate change
it.

App. Claudius, thy shallow mind knows not mankind;
Thou can'st not read them. The tools of pow'r are weak,
And cautious cunning rules them at its will.
Take seeming int'rest in thine hand, and paint
It scatt'ring golden show'rs; and from thy lips
Let words of crafty smoothness ever flow,
And flatt'ring tales of hope, and lib'ral promise:

Then shall all eyes be blind, all tongues be hush'd,
All ears be charm'd, all wills obedient too.

Clau. O how I joy to hear thee speak! and sure
Such wisdom merits rule o'er meaner men.

App. And what is pow'r but pain, if gaining much,
It feels a trivial want? A little stream
Must not fix bounds to mighty empire. 'Tis hard
To rule poor men, yet want what they possess.
This virgin must be mine! Then let us now
Devise the means how best I may attain her.

Clau. Mean'st thou to gain her then by wedded rites?

App. Claudius, I feel a sense within forbids
That wish: pride wars with love, its greatest foe;
And it will yet be heard, though reason melts.
I never will forget that I am Appius,
Nor will I basely stoop. By all the gods,
I think that we have right to tread on reptiles,
On such as these; all baser beauty made
For us; all humbler excellence design'd
For our delight, who boast of nobler souls.
It should be pleas'd when we descend to take
What abject slaves and peasant tribes can give.
The humble flow'r grows vain, and opens all
Its borrow'd charms before the golden sun.

Clau. But is thy purpose honest?

App. What say'st thou, creature?
Honest? how dar'st thou talk to me, to me
Of honesty, who know thee for a villain?
Then be a true one. What, shall Plebeians talk
Of honour?

Clau. Great sir, thy servant never meant—

App. Nay more, I would not trust thee if I thought
Thou couldst be just. I know 'tis int'rest binds
Thee to my will, and if thou dar'st betray,
Ruin and death await thee.

Clau. I pray be calm; thy client hears thy will,
And lives but to obey thy fixt decrees.

App. Claudius, I've been indeed too warm: no more
Of this—('Twere better soothe him to my purpose.
How great thy pow'r, O Virtuel since thy name

Is priz'd by villains thus, who fain would sin
Beneath thy cloke.) [*Aside.*] I do believe thee faithful,
And will beyond thy wish reward thy service.

Clau. Command, I will obey.

App. Then mark my words:
This virgin wears that ostentatious character
Which we distinguish by the sense of honour;
A sort of pride, which o'er-puff'd virtue claims.
We must oppose a passion yet more strong.
Your task is to entice the maid to meet
My wish. Be nothing lost which can inflame
A female mind, with splendour glitt'ring more
Than solid worth: paint every charm of pomp
With highest colouring, and gild it all
With flatt'ry, sweet to man, but evermore
To woman's ear resistless. Try every art.
I know thy skill, and on its pow'r rely.
Be diligent, and I will aid as each
Occasion calls. We must not fail. Be prompt.
Remember well on thy success depends
At once the life, the happiness of Appius. [*Exit.*]

Clau. [solus.] How strong the tide of passion flows!
He knows me;

'Twere therefore vain to seem what I am not.
Then since 'tis so, I'll profit what I can;
And if from vice I dare not turn (for none
Escape its crooked paths), I must go on;
And since I cannot taste the pure reward
Of innocence, in the mean time I'll thrive
By villainy, and tread that beaten road. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

THE STREET.

VIRGINIUS and ICILIUS.

ICIL. While from the tumult of the clam'rous war
Thou yet abstain'st, I would receive thy lessons:

I then may hope to tread the paths of fame,
And toil behind thee; for thy great exploits
Warm all my breast: I feel the ardour burn
That hopes to rival thee. How in the field
I've seen thee dare such more than mortal deeds,
That admiration stood enchanted while
It view'd, and aged warriors were amaz'd!

Vir. Enough of this; I hate the voice of flatt'ry.

Icil. Flatt'ry! by heav'n 'tis not. The noble mind
Should not disdain the fair reward of praise.

Vir. But praise must not be scatter'd lavishly;
It is too sacred to be lightly giv'n.
When well apply'd, it most enriches virtue,
Making e'en that more worth: it is the spur
Which quickens honour's pace, and emulates
The generous breast to deeds of high achievement;
It puts dishonour to the blush. Then weigh
With care most scrupulous thy precious gifts,
Nor let them wasteful fall, like common dews,
Upon the wholesome and the noxious herb.
The good alone deserve thy commendation.
Praise is like gold, of little estimation
If it be plenty, and 'tis valu'd most
By scarceness: heap'd on all, it flatters none.
Let not demerit steal the dues of virtue.

Icil. Virtue will never want its share of praise.

Vir. Too oft the world is lavish of its favours.
While modest merit friendless toils along
Its rugged paths, undaunted impudence
Steps forth and boldly claims its dear-earn'd laurels.
Then giddy indiscretion, ill discerning,
Leaves goodness naked. Oh! it mads me when
I see vain-glory drest in virtue's garb.

Icil. I would have praise, and would deserve it too.

Vir. That is a noble aim, my good Icilius.
Without the sense of true desert 'twill give
Thee no delight, 'twill be a barren gain.
Wouldst thou deserve it? labour is the price.
Seek not a meteor's glory, an exhalation
A moment shining, falling whilst it shines.

The airy eagle's nest is built on high,
And we must climb to reach it. Pearls are deep hid
Within the bosom of the dangerous sea,
And we must dive within its depths to gain them.

Icil. Tutor'd by thee, my paths must all be right.
Then lead the way, and I will follow, my friend,
My father, and my guide.

Vir. 'Twas thy high worth,
My good Icilius, led my cautious mind
To choose thee as my bosom friend. I saw
Thy soul rich in the blossoms of fair hope;
The seed which promis'd a most glorious harvest,
When in the tribuneship you nobly stood
The people's friend, and gain'd the people's love.
I chose thee as my friend, but what is more,
More to a father, chose thee as the friend
Of a lov'd child, the sweet Virginia's guardian;
That when this throbbing heart shall beat no more
With vital strength, and the cold urn of death
Holds all that may remain of me, my child
May meet a kind protector and a guide,
And find a father in a husband's arms.

Icil. How shall I thank thee for that gift? more rich
To me than specious wealth, and dear as virtue;
Dear as or life or liberty; so sweet
That in comparison all beauty fades.
It fills my soul with such a copiousness
Of bliss, with such a fulness of delight,
That sorrow cannot find a little space
Within the crowded breast to force one pang
Of discontent. I look on all the world
With such complacency that I know no envy,
Nor soar to high Patrician rank.

Vir. I've told thee
There is a nobler greatness, far above
Patrician rank; the nurse of puny fools,
Of the degenerate seed of buried fame:
Remembrance makes the weak descendant blush,
Or lights, like useless lamps in sepulchres,
The poor remains of faded pride; a blaze

That burns awhile, then sinks to shine no more.
Worth seldom claims hereditary course.
As tapers waste, and leave no trace behind,
So splendid talents shine and sink in night.
High birth is often like the spreading stream
That runs o'er sand; more weak as it proceeds.
There is, my good Icilius, there is a strength
Of soul, a native nobleness, that shines
Self luminous, and casts such splendour round,
Such radiant rays, that borrow'd honour shrinks,
And fades like lesser lights before the sun.

Icil. 'Tis that I would attain, and that would cherish.

Vir. Vaunt not Patrician rank; does it inflame
The soul with brighter fire? does it supply
A finer grace to form? or knit the limbs,
Or brace the nerves with firmer strength? or touch
The features with more blooming loveliness?
Nay, the rough peasant may display more strength,
Bloom with more health, and smile with more content.

Icil. Patricians find no friend in thee, Virginius.

Vir. Are not their aims oppressive to the people?
Does not our Rome now groan from tyranny?
By all the gods, I feel the heavy weight,
I feel the load that pulls my country down;
But I will raise it up, or greatly fall.
Those vile Decemvirs who depress our Rome
And all her verdant laurels in the dust,
If e'er occasion be, shall feel the force
Of this rude arm, and it shall strike the steel
To proud Oppression's heart. Let me but feel
Thy spirit, Brutus, in my humbler soul,
And great attempts I'll dare; and should success
But crown my gen'rous aims, the people's chains
Shall burst, and liberty lead peace around,
And plenty reign o'er all the smiling land.

Icil. O Liberty! at thy bright name how fires
My soul! a noble ardour lifts me up
To glorious daring.

Vir. But yet beware, good youth,
Lest that great name deceive thee. 'Tis the best gift

The gods bestow: but 'tis a manly sense
 Of right, that scorning all restraint of evil,
 Like air or thought, will struggle to be free:
 Yet is too noble to break out in fury,
 In heedless action, or in factious clamour.
 Licentiousness is like the noisy stream
 That brawling runs its course; that when confin'd,
 Its channel frets, but as it widens more
 Loses both depth and strength. True liberty
 Boasts to be free alone for virtuous ends,
 And only follows as true wisdom leads.

Icil. Friend of my youth, thy counsels shall my guide,
 And thy example my great pattern prove:
 So shall I tread a true and glorious course.
 Lend me thy aid, and I shall rise to fame.
 So shelter'd by the aged wood, secure
 The tender sapling dares the storms endure,
 Till fixt in root, and mounting in the skies,
 Itself a full, a friendly shade supplies;
 Then firm in strength, though elements engage,
 Alone it mocks the tempest's utmost rage. [Exeunt.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

VIRGINIUS'S HOUSE.

VIRGINIUS and VIRGINIA.

Virginius.

WEEP not, Virginia, I pray thee weep not,
For thy distress will quite unman thy father;
Will make those channels moist which have so long
Been all unus'd to tears. With sorrow's drops
The vet'ran's hardy face is little grac'd.
But yet believe I feel, my sweet Virginia,
Although I shew it not. Be thou consol'd.

Virg. What shall console me? wilt thou not depart
And haste to join the bold impatient troops,
Who soon, too soon, 'gainst hostile armies rank'd,
Shall menace death, and wait the fatal signal?
And when the trumpet's deathful voice shall fill
The frightened air with horrible dismay,
Piercing e'en bravery's heart, then wilt thou, borne
By thy undaunted courage, rush to scenes
Of thickest danger; then 'gainst thy aged breast
Shall fields of cruel spears be thrust, and round
Thy rev'rend head shall hissing arrows rain:
Swords shall be rais'd, destruction gleaming on
Their fatal edge; horse mad'ning rush on horse,
With dreadful prancings tread the steps of death;
Whilst 'mid the shout scarce shall the dying hear
His soul-pierc'd groan, alas! nor ever hear
Condoling sounds of pity.

Vir. Banish such fears!

Virg. Then should'st thou sink, fainting with ghastly
wounds,
Borne from the field, who shall be near to soothe
Thy pain with pious deeds of tenderness?
Watch over thee, as poor Virginia would?

And should'st thou fall, my sire, a fatal victim,
How shall she bear the cruel stroke of death?

Vir. Thy fears suggest the worst: but rather think
How will thy heart with lively transports beat,
When I return with laurels on my brow,
Enrich'd by victory, and rais'd by fame?

Virg. Alas! in such rude glory our soft sex
Cannot exult: we are for blessed peace.
And though we love the brave, yet still we shudder,
Hearing the warrior's tale. Thou wilt not live
Inglorious well I know; but I would keep
Thee safe. 'Tis said a Roman should be great
In fame: he ranks above the nations round.
But why should men seek fame from cruelty?
On their own race why deal eternal ruin?
Can they not aim at virtues which are godlike?
Contend for nobler ends than idle conquest?
Swords would be then for ever sheath'd; matrons
Would waste no sighs; and War's alarming voice
Be never heard to fright out gentle Peace
From all her still retreats: but rural scenes
Would then resound with harmless mirth, and ring
Responsive to the music of the groves.

Vir. Thy unsuspecting mind is little vers'd
In mad ambition's views, or avarice
Which chills the heart, and stifles mercy's cries:
While these shall reign mankind will know no peace;
And virtue will be hid in the false glare
Of vain mistaken glory. But I must hence;
And lest this may the last occasion prove,
(Though Heaven avert such ill, and I fear not)
Let me now aid thy yet unpractis'd mind
With sober counsel.

Virg. I will attend thee, sire,
Lay up thy lessons in my heart, and be
Indeed what'er thy wish. For sure the gods
Thy soul with wisdom fill'd, and will attend
My prayers, if I pursue with steady steps
The dictates, which they teach from thy kind lips.

Vir. First then, my dear Virginia, of faithless men

Be thou suspicious, who lie in wait
For innocence; and the more fair it seems
The more th' unfeeling race desire to spoil it.
For beauty, like the gaudy flow'r, bespeaks
The gath'rer's hand by gaily flourishing:
The fairest fruit invites the spoiler's eye.
But who shall e'er restore once faded hues?
Who give again the native freshness back,
The delicate and purple bloom, which once
The ruder touch defiles?

Virg. Distrust me not.

Vir. The gods forbid I should! but we must e'er
Distrust ourselves. Virtue is most in danger
When of her natural strength most confident;
For then her guard's asleep. And there are men,
My sweet Virginia, who lusting to betray,
Will falsely swear till heav'n itself shall blush;
Then laugh at the poor fair one who believes them:
They triumph o'er the ruins which they cause.
Light and inconstant as the winds they are,
Which blight the bud, and spoil its summer's pride;
Their victim dress a gaudy sacrifice;
And when it little dreams of ill, uplift
The knife and strike, nor heed its plaintive cries.
Then be thou deaf to all the words of men.

Virg. O cruel race! how does my soul abhor them!

Vir. And yet vain fair ones, caught by outward show,
Or light unmeaning tales, too willing lend
An ear, regardless of more solid worth;
They lavishly bestow on fools what they
Deny to better men.

Virg. Vain ones indeed!

I can yield life, but never part with honour.

Vir. There spoke the shade of great Lucretia.
So look'd thy mother—so she spake: thou knew'st
Her not, Virginia; she was all truth,
And chastity.

Virg. Methinks I knew her well.

Vir. The tomb had long receiv'd her sacred ashes
Ere memory could imprint her images

Upon thy unimpressive mind; how then
Shouldst thou remember her?

Vir. There is in thought
An image oft which fancy forms. Who bears
A thing describ'd will colours take from thence,
And give imaginary life and shape.

Vir. Ah! she was chaste, Virginia! be like
Her then. Virtue is woman's greatest pride;
'Tis beauty's ornament, and firmest pow'r;
For even loveliness it makes more lovely;
Will give it charms that can outlive mere form:
When lost, it is a breath escap'd, which then
The wasted body to corruption leaves.
But see! Icilius comes, and warns me hence.

Enter ICILIUS.

Icil. The horses wait. E'en now the prancing steeds
With solid hoofs strike the firm ground, and neigh
Impatient for the course.

Vir. I too am ready.
Yet, good Icilius! ere we part, receive
An old man's counsel. To thee I have betroth'd
My child; a prize that will become the wearer.
Let me, for once, indulge a father's fondness.
Behold that lovely form! is it not all
That fancy pictures? more than art can e'er
Express? brilliant as op'ning day, and soft
As blushing eve? So does the jewel sparkle:
But what will more enhance, it has no flaw.
I give thee loveliness, that might bring back
Old age to second youth, and thaw the frost
Of time. But more, I give thee native worth,
Which great as beauty's pow'r may seem, by far
Surpasses it: I give thee purity,
Chaste as the falling snow, and just as fair.

Icil. I take the gift with joy, and thank the giver:
I cannot but be grateful; and want words
That may enough express my thankfulness.

Vir. Then wear it near thy heart, good youth! Be true

To honour's laws: that will repay thy faith.
My friend, I chose thee for thy seeming worth;
Then to thyself be true: but shouldst thou e'er
Be tempted to betray, know that I wear
A sword; this arm has nerve, and can avenge
A father's wrongs.

Icil. I scorn the thought of baseness:
Icilius glories in the paths of honour.

Vir. Still tread those paths, and thou wilt well de-
serve her.

Cherish her love, and she will prove the source
Of noble acts. Fair is the budding wish
Of virtuous love, and sweet is its reward;
'Twill brighten all thy prospects and thy toils,
And ever raise such cheering hope as glads
The weary traveller, who hopes to view
Once more, at friendly eve, his social home.

Icil. If not deserving, may I ne'er obtain her!

Vir. And thou, Virginia, be not too distant, pray,
Nor too compliant. Hope keeps love alive;
And gratitude is crush'd by favours heap'd
Too fast. Think not affection's stores exhaustless.
Long use blunts the sharp edge of zest. The eye
That winks at light soon bears the open sun.
The gather'd rose proverbial lessons forms;
And our inconstant minds are giv'n to change.
May both be blest! one kiss; and now farewell! [*Exit.*]

Virg. [*looking after him.*] O kindest father that e'er
lov'd a daughter!

O fare thee well!— [*Falling on her knees.*]
Ye gods, who favour and protect the good,
Hear and receive my pious pray'r! Restore
Him here with honour crown'd, to part no more!
O my Icilius! [*rising.*] O teach me now to bear
The anxious hours of doubt and apprehension!

Icil. Whate'er Icilius can perform, or love
And tenderness inspire, to make them smooth,
Shall be employ'd.

Virg. And yet methinks, good youth,
Could it be so, thou shouldst pursue his steps;

Mix in the tumults of the war, and shield
His valu'd life from harm; look with an eye
Acute, an eagle's sight, and turn away
Each pointed weapon that might aim to wound him;
Spread thy wide shield, and catch the dreadful stroke
That would cut duty, love, and life asunder:
A favouring genius be, that not an hair
Be harm'd; for each is number'd in affection,
And thou shouldst scrupulously reckon for them.

Icil. O that my duty did not here detain me!
Then would I fly to execute thy will;
I would indeed protect him with this arm;
Do all that love and friendship could inspire;
Receive th' uplifted blow of threat'ning fate,
And save his life for my Virginia's sake.

Virg. And yet it were unkind to send thee forth
For others good to brave the face of peril;
Both might I lose, then vainly hoping one
To save; and such a choice were hard indeed!
To part with either were to give an eye
To save its fellow.

Icil. How shall I e'er repay
Such love! Days seem too short to look on thee;
And oh! how long the slow-pac'd night that parts us!
In love's bright calendar should be no note
Of time, save of appointed hours; all else
Should be a sweet forgetfulness of care.
Long may our bliss endure! But yet I feel
Opprest with heaviness ill understood;
I fear scarce knowing what. Excess of joy
O'erpow'rs my soul, and hangs like the bright drop
Of morning's dew upon the trembling leaf,
Ready for instant fall by its own fulness.

Virg. There seems some hidden mystery in thy words.

Icil. It is an idle fear; but I will tell thee.
Led by a busy train of crowding thoughts,
In solitude, with pensive steps, last night
Musing I stray'd around the Campus Martius.
The moon-beams dancing on the Tiber's waves
Intent I mark'd; then soften'd down at length

By night's fair stillness, much upon our loves
I dwelt, till rais'd to highest ecstasy.

But then a self-intruding doubt came on,
A sudden chill struck to my soul; I tried
To shake this folly off, and would have laugh'd
At my own fears, but that they overwhelm'd me.

Virg. And is this all—this humour of the fancy?

Icil. Nay, thou shalt hear. From thence I stole, and
sought

My chamber, where I tried to waste in sleep
Such idle thoughts: but then succeeded dreams,
All of most unpropitious kind. Methought
We trod o'er fields sweet as Elysium's are,
Or sat in blissful bow'rs, and saw what eyes
Of mortals ne'er beheld.—Sudden the scene
Was chang'd; a cloud convey'd thee from my sight,
Left me alone, and all disconsolate.

Again we met; but thou wast chang'd; thy looks
Were sad, turning an eye of coldness on me,
Hearing my sighs unmov'd, and fleeting from my sight.

Virg. Dreams are the children of a troubled fancy.

Icil. And yet 'tis said they come from Jove himself.

Virg. Then what should these imply, I pray?

Icil.

Perhaps

Our bliss is now so high the tide may ebb,
If fortune change, which all the gods forbid.

Virg. Let us not dwell on ills before they come,
Which if they must, no foresight can prevent.
Betroth'd to thee, dost thou not call me thine?

Icil. How shall a fond impassion'd soul endure
The dull delays of time? I would be sure.

I see a waste between me and my hopes,
Desarts immense, and long and length'ning seas,
Where only disappointment broods, and hope
Protracted, pointing to receding objects.

Virg. And canst thou doubt my truth?

Icil.

I have no doubt.

But should Virginius change—O might not thou?

Virg. Virginius never swerv'd from honour's path.
His daughter dares to say she breathes his soul.

Icil. Nay, think not I would e'er suspect thy faith.

Virg. Why then these fears? these tales of dubious dreams?

Icil. Didst thou not say that dreams were idle things?

Virg. I did: but they are pictures of the mind;
And sure, *Icilius*, 'tis cruel thus to doubt.

Icil. I would not wound thy soul—

Virg. Nay, but thou dost!
Thou wak'st my woes afresh, and the full stream
O'erflows; once good, but now unkind *Icilius*.

Icil. By heav'n, she weeps!—Pardon me, fairest maid!
O curse the wanton folly that offends!
Once more look on *Icilius*! O speak forgiveness!

Virg. It were indeed unkind to doubt my truth:
I am above disguise, falsehood I scorn.

Icil. I trust thy faith, by all the gods I do!
For thou art true as fair.—

Virg. Why talk then thus?—

Icil. It is the weakness of a mind which bliss
Too exquisite o'erwhelms, and staggers reason:
It is the madness of excessive passion.
Pardon it then, and bring me back to sense.

Virg. And is this all, in truth, in very truth?—

Icil. By all the hopes of love, 'tis so! Then speak
Or look compassion on the rack'd *Icilius*!

Virg. The virtuous mind disdains the meaner arts
Of dark disguise; I will not then dissemble.
Firm in my purpose, and in truth sincere,
I cannot bear the wound of mean suspicion,
And thence thy words gave pain.—But now I trust
Thou speakest truth, and therefore with a free
And open will forgive the seeming wrong.

Icil. How exquisite that sound! My future life
Shall be devoted to my lov'd Virginia!
I never, never will offend thee more.

My sufferings for this fault shall heighten love,
And give it firmer root. Henceforth alone
I'll act, and speak, and look, to please Virginia.
O what a train of joys I see approach,
Too rich for thought, too great for utterance!

Virg. O my Icilius! Fortune may change her smile,
But never, never will Virginia change!

Icil. O then Icilius shall be blest indeed!
Within these circling arms shalt thou find aid,
From stormy life, and I will guard thee ever:
Just as the new-dropt lamb the shepherd tends,
From hungry wolves and nightly thieves defends;
Bears the poor innocent with constant care
From rude assault, and from inclement air;
And when some hostile sound his ear alarms,
Takes it to rest within his shelt'ring arms.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE, THE GARDEN OF APPIUS.

*Enter CLAUDIUS.**Claudius.*

How shall I act? not to deceive were honest;
But then will Appius thank me? Ah, no! To quench
This flame were vain to try: then I should lose
My friend, and nothing gain. Our labours seem
Useless: the virgin never will consent.
Owning the truth I shall be cast away,
Spurn'd like a tool whose edge is worn by use.
Prudent advice will but offend a stubborn will;
And he impute the failure of success
To want of skill. Why then, to save myself,
I must deceive, and feed his ardent passion.

Enter APPIUS.

App. I joy to see thee, and impatient burn
To hear thy tale; and yet I fear to know it.
If thou hast fail'd, look the bad news, and I
Will read it in thy face: so told 'twere better.
If thou canst give me hope, say yes; be quick,
And I will bless thee. Then thou may'st at large
The rest unfold, whose every circumstance
Shall ravish ears. But ah! thou hast no look;
Thou utterest not a single word—Perverse!
There is no reading in thy countenance.

Clau. Could I relate what thou wouldst wish to hear,
I should not hesitate.

App. Then thou hast fail'd.

Clau. Not so; nor to the full have I succeeded.

App. Tell all. Both ear and soul I'll lend! Be quick,

Clau. I fear this fair cannot with ease be won;
Yet won she may be, if the means be found.

Her virtue has its price, or I mistake;
And thou must offer it. She talks of honour;
Boasts of her name, and of her father's honour
Proudly she boasts. I could not patient hear her.
Forsake her, Appius; waste not a moment's thought
Upon a prude, tutor'd, perhaps, by art,
And through low cunning aiming to be paid
A higher price for what she values not.

App. It is impossible! She must be mine!

Clau. Thou know'st my faithfulness; thou know'st
alone

For duty's sake I would advise retreat.

App. I thank thee; yet cannot endure advice.
But tell me every circumstance; each look
Paint if thou canst. Minutely too disclose
Her actions and her words. Where didst thou see her?

Clau. I found her with her maids at work;
Her mind seeming disconsolate, yet busied;
As 'twere, in a distracted state; a state
As if attention aim'd to lose itself,
And care would wander from its source. She look'd
Intent upon her task, yet oft a sigh
Would rise, and the full mind discharge its weight
In this indulgence of its pain. She strove
With industry to conquer idle sorrow;
For at her father's absence much she mourn'd.

App. How did she look? I pray thee tell me all.

Clau. Her dress was simple, but 'twas elegant;
It gave some graces to her form, yet more
She gave to that: she seem'd a blushing bud,
Just bursting from its foliage, and so pure,
So innocent, as if no breath of day
Had tasted it; and when she mov'd, so light,
So soft her paces were, as of the morn;
She seem'd to scatter all its odours round.
The colour of her cheek was somewhat faint,
As touch'd by grief; and in her downcast eye
A crystal tear peep'd from its shady lid,
And like the drop of dew upon the rose,
It stole, as if in conscious haste, down o'er

Its purple bed. She look'd all innocence;
And yet, perhaps, 'twas false. Then think no more
Of cunning art, veil'd in simplicity.

App. Thou bidst a flame not burn which thou dost
light:

I feel, I feel it scorch. What next, I pray?

Clau. At my approach she rais'd her head and look'd:
O heavens! how can I say she look'd! what light
Then beam'd! 'twas loveliness!

App. Timid perhaps—

Clau. 'Twas modesty that gave to beauty pow'r,
And won by seeming unaffectedness.
It veil'd her charms, yet made them more engaging;
Chaste as the blushing clusters of the vine
Behind the mantling leaves.

App. Go on, I pray.

Clau. Occasion soon I found to urge thy suit;
But circumstance by circumstance disclos'd
With utmost caution, so that fear could take
No quick alarm; its finest nerve could feel
No touch. Then by degrees I prest; but nam'd but
Thee not: my business was to reconnoitre;
'Tis thine alone to glory in the conquest.

App. How did she then receive thy soft advance?

Clau. With seeming, but, perhaps, affected scorn.
Sometimes she rav'd, and talk'd of female honour.

App. And how didst thou oppose this rising storm?

Clau. I talk'd of rank, and wealth, and dignity,
And all that could inflame a female mind;
By flattery sooth'd, and by ambition fired.

App. And did she not relent? did not a look
Betray some doubt, some wav'ring of the mind?

Clau. I must dissemble here. [*Aside.*] Why yes!
methought

Suspense held her awhile, and then a sigh
Would rise, as if it sprung from parting virtue;
Troubling her breast.

App. And look'd she then unmov'd?

Clau. Why no. When I display'd the charms of state,
Fast rose her blushes, and as fast they fell.

With rapid flushings, as in autumnal nights
Aurora sheds her lambent light.—

App. Enough!

Thus far I thank thee. More we must attempt.
Her father's absence is a circumstance
That favours my design. Each moment is
Most critical. Should he return, my hopes
Are lost. We must work fast.

Clau. Then urge thy suit:

Apply thyself, for thou may'st more prevail.

App. I thought of that—dost think it may succeed?

Clau. It will at least remove thy doubts. Perhaps
Thy eloquence, thy weight, may more effect.
The foe that long resists an equal strength,
Yields to a conqueror's name. Repelling long
The batt'ring ram, the city's walls endure;
Yet weaken'd by each stroke: a mighty blow
Succeeds, and pulls the nodding ruin down.
The stubborn gold resists a moderate heat,
But in increasing fires melts all away.
Be she as hard as rock, she may be soften'd;
Or be she colder than the ice, a sun
May melt her frost.

App. I am at once resolv'd.

Come then with me, for here the heat of day
Invades; in yonder grove we shall find shade.
More yet remains; success makes useless force;
But if I fail, it is my last resolve.
Fortune, be thou propitious to my hopes!
I will descend like Jove in show'rs of gold,
And if I fall, I'll fall like Icarus,
By nobly daring. Fortune, for once, befriend! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, VIRGINIUS'S HOUSE.

VIRGINIA and Attendant.

Virg. Tedious are hours to those who live in doubt.
O that my father were return'd once more!

Or I could learn good tidings.—Dreadful suspense!
 The mind that labours for a cure works ill
 By feeding its own grief; wasting away
 Like boiling waters in an useless struggle.
 Had but my wishes wings, fleet should they fly
 And leave the winds behind! look for good news,
 And bring it back with thought's best speed. I'm sick
 Of hope, that promises and lingers on
 Disease, but brings no cure. Give me a song,
 Perhaps it may a while divert my care. [*To the Attend.*]

SONG.

I.

*Fruition, parent of delight,
 Shed o'er my soul the beams of day,
 Dispel delay's unfriendly light,
 Chase disappointment's shades away.*

II.

*Though often chid when thou art nigh
 By sanguine hope's ungrateful train,
 Who paint expected bliss too high,
 And then of fancied ills complain.*

III.

*O crown us now with real bliss,
 And in truth's plainer garb be drest!
 O teach me where I hope amiss,
 And give my anxious passions rest!*

Enter CLAUDIUS.

Clau. My fair, Virginia, I bring thee pleasing tidings;
 Our great Decemvir now approaches; comes
 To offer thee his kind condolence.

Virg. Indeed! I never can be worthy such an honour.

Clau. He enters; now receive him as a friend.

Virg. [to the Attend.] Withdraw awhile.

[*Exeunt* Attend. and *Clau.*]

Enter APPIUS.

App. Good day to fair Virginia, if there is need
To wish thee health; for in thy face it sits,
And sadness cannot rob thee of its charms.

Virg. I am as well as heavy grief admits;
Health flies at its approach: if now I wear
Its rosy smiles, believe me that it is
A flatt'ring smile, for pain sits at my heart.
This sudden glow reflects the grateful sense
Of condescension, which thy visit speaks.

App. What cause then gives such pain to loveliness
So exquisite? shalt thou so mourn, whom all
Thy sex with envy view, and ours with love?

Virg. A father's absence, and a father's danger.

App. I come, my fairest maid, to soothe thy cares.

Virg. It is most kind! But how shall I return
The mighty debt? I thank thee, noble Appius,
For this thy condescension.

App. Where beauty reigns,
Greatness must stoop, awed by a pow'r superior.

Virg. To female shrines the incense of the rich
And titled eminence are sweet: but I
Have e'er been taught most lowly lessons, to shut
The ear 'gainst flattery's voice; 'tis said to be
Most fatal to a woman's ear, and proves
The poison of our innocence. Then leave
Me that, the little wealth I call my own.

App. But thou deservest more; wealth should be thine,
Mankind thy slaves, and thou shouldst live to rule.
Then take the proffer'd prize, and scorn the paths
Of lowliness: look to ambition's heights.

Virg. But how, my lord?

App. By easy steps, by love.

Virg. Nay, my good lord, I understand thee not.

App. Be but propitious to my earnest prayer,

Great shalt thou be, for all that wealth can give
May then be thine; e'en pow'r itself shall court;
All shall adore, and all shall envy thee.

Virg. It cannot be; Virginia's aims are humble.

App. By heav'n's it shall be so! Take nobler aims;
Receive the vows of Appius now! Give thou,
And find a blessing in his arms.

Virg. Ah me!

App. What means that sudden start, that frightened
look?

Virg. Alas! we stand upon a precipice.

App. What precipice?

Virg. Icilius.

App. Why, what of him?

Virg. I am betroth'd to him, as well thou know'st.

App. He shall not cross my hopes. Immortal gods!
Shall a Plebeian shade Patrician bliss?

By Jove, he shall not! Then hear my vows, I pray.

Virg. 'Tis vain to hope; my choice is fixt on him:
Nor will Icilius tamely suffer wrong.

App. Why then he dies! Some way I'll find to rid
Me of his hated life, unless thou deign'st to hear.

Virg. That horrid threat might turn me to attention—
But tempt me not, I pray, O tempt me not
To quit the paths of honour!

App. Why, what is honour?

Virg. The brightest jewel that a woman wears:
The great are vile indeed whene'er they lose it;
And but possess of that, the poor are noble.

App. Then for Icilius' sake, to save his life—

Virg. On terms like these he scorns ignoble life.
Better to see him die than see him base!

Then for Icilius servile fears I lose:

And for myself, I dare the worst, rather
Than part with honour!

App. Gods! I'm robb'd of patience!

I will not hear this idle talk! Be kind,
And all that wealth can give at once is thine.

Virg. I scorn the base temptation. What will that
give?

Crimes it may gild, but will it give me back
My ruin'd peace? Ah, no! and I shall sigh
In splendid wretchedness; robb'd of that bliss,
That solid comfort, which can make the shades
Of darkness smile, and the low cottage seem a palace.

App. Thou triflest with my flame. Come, come, be
wise—

Virg. Approach me not, my lord—

App. Thou must be kind —

Virg. Then tremble at a father's awful name!

He will avenge my wrongs. Pierce thou my breast,
And I will bless the hand that points the steel,
And gladly view the tide of parting life.
A vestal's punishment with joy embrace,
To save my spotless fame: be sunk alive
Deep in the earth. Heap thou whole mountains on me,
Still chaste I'll be; alive or dead, still chaste.
And or alive or dead, a father's wrath
Shall still pursue thy guilty head. Behold
How firm insulted virtue dares to be!

App. Begone, O weak resolves! [*aside.*] Thou shalt
be mine!

For in my pow'r thou art. No busy eye,
No ear attends; the household slaves are brib'd.

Virg. Unhand me, pray! Thus low I bend, [*kneels*]
O hear

A virgin's prayer! Thou wear'st the honour'd traits
Of age, the silver marks of rev'rend time:
Feel for a father's name; be thou a father!
Nay, shouldst thou still persist, I'll raise such cries
As shall awaken help, e'en though it slept
With death; pierce thro' the skies, and bring me down
Some deity to succour and preserve me.
O help! O help! Are no attendants near?
Thus then [*draws a dagger*] determin'd, thus I stand;
approach,

And I will plunge it in my breast, and rob
Thee of thy horrid purpose.—

App. It were not prudent now to urge this farther.—
Perverse! I must dissemble here awhile. [*Aside.*

Nay, rest in peace, fair maid: look not so wild;
 Turn on thy friend, who would not injure thee.
 Thou shalt in Appius find a father too.

Virg. O heav'nly sound! that surely was the voice
 Of some kind god, and lowly thus I thank thee.

App. Virginia, rise! I would not injure thee.
 My justice ever shall protect the good.
 I only meant to prove thy virtue thus:
 Pardon this trial of thy constancy,
 And henceforth think me ever bound thy friend.

Virg. Should I forgive, will then a father's rage
 Be pacified? Know thou, whate'er thy threat,
 This shameful deed shall never be conceal'd.
 Whether his anger sleeps at honour's wound
 Time can alone disclose, but I ne'er think it.

App. Since thou disdain'st me thus, proud fair one!
 know

I stand too high above thy humble vengeance.
 I leave thee to thy foolish, barren virtue,
 At leisure to repent of this thy scorn.

[*Exit.*

Virg. [*sola.*] Blest be the gods, he's gone! I tremble
 yet

To think what I've escap'd. What fears assail me!
 Like one I stand whose foot had nearly slipt,
 And yet beholds the precipice below.
 Fierce were his looks, and anger rages in him.
 Silence were to partake the horrid crime;
 And yet my father will not bear the rude
 Assault. Icilius too will burst with rage.
 And should revenge reveal the tale, and add
 Some circumstance of guilt to injure me,
 My caution will appear my condemnation.
 That would be fatal too. Virtue should ne'er
 Connive at vice: terror and death await
 On either side.—Oh! bitter, bitter grief!

Enter ICILIUS.

Icil. Where is my love? Virginia, thus I fly
 Impatient to thy arms! It seems an age

Since last we met.—But what means this? in tears?
Tell me, I pray, thy grief, that I may cure,
Or take the half by sympathy away!

Virg. Alas! O good Icilius!

Icil. What should this mean?

Virg. 'Twere best untold: I would not wound thy ears,
I would not check thy tide of happiness.

Icil. O tell thy anxious love, thy own Icilius.
Is there a pang of thine that is not his?
A joy he would not share with thee? Speak then,
I pray, or else suspense drives him to madness.

Virg. Swear then that thou wilt calmly hear; alone
Wilt speak, alone wilt act as I would wish:
Let all thy thoughts be prisoners to my will,
And silence chain thy tongue till I unloose it.

Icil. I swear—unless my honour feel a wound.

Virg. All is undone; I must not have conditions.

Icil. Then more I dare not.

Virg. Await my father's will.
Take cautious, practis'd wisdom, in thine hand.

Icil. To that I swear.

Virg. Ah me! that wicked Appius—

Icil. Ah! what of him?

Virg. Why Appius would corrupt thy own Virginia!

Icil. What! Appius! say when, or where!

Virg. Just now it was.
Attended by a single maid, whilst here
I sat me down, within these doors he came.

Icil. Within these doors! O heavens!

Virg. Nay, pray be calm.—
He vilely press'd me to dishonesty.

Icil. What! press'd thee to dishonour? speak again.

Virg. O yes! 'tis sure he did; whilst I trembling,
And as the dove seiz'd by the villain kite,
Within his talons feels his death in fear
Before the tyrant strikes, so beat my heart.

Icil. Appius, thou diest! this arm shall hurl thee down
To death! 'Tis fit that such a wretch should die.

Virg. Ah now, alas! unkind; 'twas this I fear'd.

Icil. Shall I be tame, while villains walk the earth

To rob me of my love and honour both?
I am resolv'd.—

Virg. Then suppliant thus I kneel.
Here will I cling around thee till thou hear'st
My prayer!—Didst thou not swear?

Icil. Arise, I did, but now—

Virg. I never will till thou shalt swear anew
To keep thy solemn word: await Virginius.
Add not, I pray, his wrath to this my woe.

Icil. Arise, my love! I will be calm, and wait
Thy father's will. But, oh! I burn to strike
The vile Decemvir, and destroy his pride.

Virg. Revenge is impotent on pow'r, and falls
Like arrows on the rock, with blunted points.

Icil. When I this morn exprest my dread of woe,
Did not Virginia think me then unkind?
And yet my fears have prov'd, alas! too true.

Virg. How could I bear to have my honour doubted?
Nor then foresaw the rising storm: and who
Should trust in idle dreams, the sickly gloom
Of a discolour'd mind? Protect me then,
An orphan now o'erwhelm'd with ills.

Icil. Come to these arms, and prove my tender care;
Find coolness from the heat, and shelter from the storm.
As round the stately elm the creeping vine
Winds close its tender limbs, intent to twine;
There rais'd, and clasp'd in warm and fond embrace,
Repays the borrow'd aid with pendent grace;
Woman from man her best support receives,
And pays with grace what he protecting gives.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A STREET IN ROME.

LUCIUS, VALERIUS, NUMITOR, and PUBLIUS, meeting.

Numitor.

O WELL met, Publius! O how I joy to see thee!
Thou hast been miss'd when needed most, my son.

Pub. What need, good father?

Num. How canst thou ask, when Rome
Is all in tumult at this dread event?

Pub. I know of no event. Without the city
Have I been plunging in the Tiber's streams,
To brace my languid limbs, and gain new strength;
And now I hasten home. But yet methought
That something strange and new had fallen out;
For as I pass'd the streets, in little circles,
Men gather'd round, and full of anxious looks,
As list'ning to some novel circumstance;
And here and there a crowd of curious females,
Infants and old, press'd round some orator,
That seem'd to tell some very wondrous tale,
But more to make himself the wonder aim'd:
Press'd by my haste, I did not stay to listen.

Val. Confusion long has reign'd throughout the city.
All the accumulated woes of guilt
Seem bursting o'er our heads; but guilt not ours.
The tyrant Appius throws aside the cloak
Of justice, giving all his crimes full scope.

Num. O Publius, alas! a most atrocious deed
Has now been done in Rome! Wouldst thou believe
The daughter of my brother has been seiz'd,
The young Virginia, as late she walk'd the streets;
One Claudius claim'd her as his slave of right,
Drag'd her to the tribunal, where enthron'd
Sat haughty Appius; all has been full

Of anarchy, no tongue can tell how great.
The proud Decemvir to the claim inclines,
And threatens the execution of his sentence.
But when a tumult rose, we then prevail'd
To have this wicked matter farther weigh'd;
And two days hence th' appointed time of trial:
A moment's farther date we could not gain.

Luc. O had you seen, my friends, the modest maid,
As from the schools she came, and with a train
Of females too accompany'd, above
Them all she shone in native purity,
Fairest of fair, and sweetest of the sweet!
But when the wicked Claudius sudden seiz'd
Th' affrighted maid, how like the lamb she trembled,
Torn from its mother's fleecy side, or like
The fearful fawn caught in the treach'rous snare!
O had you heard her shrieks, and seen her tears,
Your hearts, like mine, had bled at every pore!
Then horror struck the crowd that gather'd round,
And floods of pity rain'd from every eye.

Pub. Unheard of guilt! Where is the injur'd maid?

Num. O she is safe as yet, but drown'd in grief,
And as I fear is verging on distraction.

Luc. Is it for this that we have granted power,
Yielded our rights, resign'd our dearest cares,
To the Decemvirs, those who treat with scorn,
With abject scorn, the freedom of the people?
Are these our rulers, or our direst foes?
Intolerable foes are those who reign

By stern oppression, mock us with the name
Of liberty; better to tyrannize.

O galling chains of bitter usurpation!
O fickle Rome; still ever given to change,
And still the hapless prey of petty tyrants!

Val. How little man can bear exalted state!

Rais'd on the pinnacle of power, his head
Grows dizzy with the height, and reason fails him;
Intoxicate with pride, that swallows all,
And every virtue fades that blest his humbler days.
When drunk with pow'r, man is a savage beast,

And all the milder graces fly his bosom.
This progress have I mark'd in haughty Appius,
And with Horatius tried to turn the tide.

Hor. Yes, oft I dared arraign his guilty arts!
Insidious man! father of specious promise!
Let men beware of confidence in those
Who court the shouts of popularity.
Pretences those that serve to lift them up
The toilsome steps of high and proud ambition.
Rais'd to the topmost height, they then become
The oppression of the credulous silly crowd.—
These were the arts of Appius, and when I dared
In public plead against his tyranny,
He bade me sit in silence, but I dared
His utmost fury, spoke of all his guilt,
And shook the forum with a loud harangue.
Awhile confin'd he shrunk, but inward rage
And dark revenge sat scowling on his brow.

Num. But haste, my son, with Lucius, who awaits
thee.

Thou brother of Icilius too. With speed
Betake ye both to Algidum; inform
Virginus of this disastrous tale,
And urge his quick return. I must be gone:
Each moment is of utmost consequence.
Time quickly flies, though loaded with such cares.

Haste then, and may the best success attend you!

Pub. Our haste shall far outstrip thy expectation.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

APPIUS and CLAUDIUS.

Clau. Nay, let not Appius mourn. True, we have
fail'd.

What then? some fairer maid shall meet thy wish,
Yield willing beauties to thy arms, repay

Thy bounteous love with transports warm and true
As those thou giv'st.

App. Talk not of fairer maids!
None can be found so fair. She is the star
That eve first lights, and none in all her train
Are half so bright. Then talk no more of others.

Clau. At best this brilliant star is but a woman,
Beneath thy farther care. What are the sex
But triflers all, capricious night's vain meteors,
That shine but to deceive and lead astray?

App. These are the words of cold indifference;
Of apathy, that reasons clearly while
The passions sleep. The sex, thou say'st, are empty:
True; but they polish rough and hardy man.
Yet I could curse them whilst I praise: for, oh!
This toy, this trifle, woman, stays my course,
Arrests the eagle in his flight, who whilst
He soars above the sun, would stoop for prey
Down in the vale. Without her, grandeur sickens,
Ambition has no charms: mine then she must be.
Let us pursue and win; success is ours.

Clau. Claudius is e'er devoted to thy service.

App. It was a failure of my evil genius.

Clau. Why didst thou yield the point? why give her
up?

App. Thou know'st my last resolve. I bade thee claim
The virgin as thy slave. The proofs we plann'd,
And seiz'd by thee, she stood before my throne.

Clau. I with great struggles brought her. It chanc'd
I met

Her in the street accompany'd by females.
At once they grew outrageous when I seiz'd her;
A clamour rais'd, and would with shrieks and cries
Have caus'd her rescue, but my aid was firm.

App. Ah! then I judg'd her mine; I thought at
once

My joys secure, and counted future raptures.

Clau. But then Icilius came, all hot with rage,
And with him brought the noisy Numitor,
And others of her patrons, as thou knew'st.

Thou know'st too well what furious storms they rais'd;
But hadst thou persever'd, they must have yielded.

App. Ah! there thou err'st. I saw the storm increase,
The clouds became more black, and gath'ring thunder,
Ready to burst, hung low'ring o'er our heads.

Clau. Indeed I fear'd myself: but there's a point
When bold attempts must be pursued, nor stop
In danger's face, or they will fail. Who scales
A city's walls must daringly go on;
E'en at the ladder's top defy the foe.
One happy moment turns the trembling scale
Of doubtful battle into valour's favour.

App. 'Tis true. But mark me, as I know the world,
The mask of honesty will e'er deceive.

Much shall we gain by this delay; more just
My sentence will be thought; thy claim the same.

Clau. But should Virginius come all is undone.

App. He is at Algidum.

Clau. But they may send.

App. He is secured, he cannot now return.

Clau. Then thou hast sent to give intelligence.

App. Just so: The moment that I left the forum,
An instant trusty messenger dismiss'd
By me, informs my colleagues 'tis my will
Virginius should remain at Algidum:
That I had reasons of the state; thereon
Its safety might depend: a plot was form'd
Against us; that Virginius was its author,
And I suspected might demand a furlough.
Farther I charg'd them on their lives to grant
Him none; for on that point, I said, safety
Might now alone depend.

Clau. Then he's secured.

App. Had I been deaf to all their prayers, the prize
Had now been mine; but yet I thought it dang'rous.
The crowded forum loud resounded with
The murm'ring people, who, like swelling seas
That beat the shore, did threaten growing storms:
The lamentations of the wailing females,
Who join in every cause to aid their sex,

And make it ever theirs with one consent:
The earnest pleading of the boy Icilius,
And the bold aid of Numitor the uncle;
All, all conspir'd to raise the discontent:
I saw it swell each moment to the point
Of bursting, and I fear'd the vast explosion.

Clau. These ills to-morrow must thou meet again.

App. I know I must; but meet then more prepar'd,
When all my train of lictors shall attend,
And armed troops in numbers guard me round.
This short delay shall seem like clemency,
Yet not prevent our plot. Justice shall look
More fair, that slowly thus proceeds with caution.

Clau. Thou art most skill'd; I will obey.

App. Depend on this, hypocrisy will oft
Succeed when honest measures fail. Short though
Its triumph be, I matter not the future.
I know mankind are ever dupes to knaves,
Nor does detection teach them to be wise.

Clau. Thy thoughts are just.

App. We will consult of proof,
Which thou must warmly urge, but I admit
Seemingly loth. But let us now be gone,
And weigh each circumstance of our proceeding;
Forecast impediments, that we may meet
Them cloth'd in prudent caution's wary armour.
And should my seeming justice raise complaint,
I'll stand unmov'd, and dare to execute
My plan. I'll drag her from their arms; thunder
Like angry Jove upon their wretched heads;
And when revenge is satisfied, I'll steal
To melting beauty, find within its arms
A second triumph; glad, victorious, sooth'd:
Like the wild tempest, raging through the day,
And sinking down to rest upon the breast
Of smiling Eve, who blushes as she draws
The curtains round of stillness and of sleep. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

VIRGINIUS'S HOUSE.

VIRGINIA on a Couch with Attendants.

Enter NUMITOR.

Num. Alas! alas! this house is full of sorrow,
Which late was gay as youthful innocence.
Each servant turns away his woe-worn face,
To hide the falling tear: grief is so busied
As if to weep were all it had to do.
Ah, what a change is here! Sorrow and bliss
Are surely near akin; like light and shade,
The mix'd companions of each mortal day.
What shrieks again, breaking the solemn pause
Of cheerless melancholy's dull abode!
How fares it with the poor Virginia now? [To Attend.

Attend. Her fears have wrought such feverish effects,
That now she raves, and now is calm again:
We cannot keep her in due bounds; and now
And then she wakes, and scarcely can be held.

Num. Alas! my sweet Virginia.

Virg. [waking disordered.] Hide me! hide me!
He follows fast! Look how his eyes are full
Of fire! his beard is silvery, and so
My father's is: but he looks hideously.
See! see! how bloodily he shakes that steel!
Death glares upon its point. Save me! save me!—
Ah! now he's gone; that cloud was very kind.—
Well, now I'll go and see my murder'd father;
Will tell it all to him. But each of us
Must whisper softly, for the air is full
Of hearing: secrets too have many wings.
Ah! now he comes again!

Num.

Dear maid, fear not,

Virg. Do you not see him there? why look again:
His eyes are moons; his face is deadly frightful;
His voice like mighty troops of howling wolves,
Watching poor lambs, intent to seize and tear
Their tender fleecy sides.

Num. It is thy uncle.

Virg. Ah me! how happy was I some days since!
For flowers grew up where'er I trod; the trees
Dropt honey, and the streams ran purling by.
Alas! methinks I know thee, my good sir.

Num. It is the same.

Virg. Ah! we are very sad. [*Knocking at the door.*
There! there he comes again! the lictors crowd
Around me now! I see the horrid faces!

Enter ICILIUS.

Drive off these wolves, they shall not tear me from him!
My father, save!

Icil. [*approaching her.*] My love! O woeful sight!

Virg. Nay, come not near! See how he's wrapt in
flame!

I shall be scorch'd. Off, horrid monster! off.
See how he grins! What should be eyes are hollow,
And yet how fearfully they look! Ah me!

Icil. Dost thou not know thy own Icilius?

Virg. I think I did; alas! thou art not him,
For Appius stab'd him yesterday; his bier
Sweet flow'rs bestrew'd; they never smelt so sweet
Before. Well, since he's dead, I'll go and weep
Upon his grave, and that soft rain may make
The faded flow'rs revive, and then he'll rise
Sweet as the blushing bud, just wash'd by dew,
Or like the golden eye of waking morn.

Icil. Thy own Icilius now is here; grief wrings
His heart to hear thee say thou know'st him not.

Num. 'Twere better she were less disturb'd: just now
She seem'd more calm, but at thy knocking loud
Her senses took alarm, and roam'd again.

Virg. Art thou Icilius?

Icil. I am, my love, indeed.

Virg. Well then, we'll go and seek a better world;
Here none are safe; the air is all contagion.
But we will have no old men there, unless
They are more virtuous. If wicked Appius comes,
We'll change us into streams, and flow away!
I laugh to think how he will look.—Again
The fairies come! they shake their burning torches!
They seize! they tear! O save me! save me! [*Runs out.*]

Num. [*to the Attendants.*] Go ye and watch her steps.

Icil. She should have rest.

May Heaven restore thee, injur'd, beauteous maid!

Num. This sudden fear bereaves her of her senses.
Sleep may restore this vagrance of the mind.

Icil. O what an heavy day is this! how full
Of anxious moments! The morrow more I dread—
Should the Decemvir then prevail, what woe
Is left in store for me! This frenzy too!
Though great my griefs, they are but light, compar'd
To what I feel for her.—O hapless fate!

Num. Nay, let us hope the best: ere morning dawn
Virginius will arrive: his presence then
May give us all both peace and rest once more.
But let us now retire, for midnight reigns.

Icil. Thou canst not know, good Numitor, the pangs
I for Virginia feel, dear as she is
To thee and all. How little can we boast
Of bliss! how sudden is the change! Lately
I floated down the smoother stream of hope
On prosp'rous gales; but now my bark is wreck'd,
My light is flown, and I am toss'd in doubt.
Thus the gay lark ascends the morning sky,
And richly floats in light and melody;
But sudden, if the passing storms appear,
Downward he bends, forsakes his bold career;
Close in some shelter hides its leaves among;
Droop'd are his moisten'd wings, and mute his song.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

ROME, THE STREET.

*Enter VIRGINIUS.**Virginus.*

SCARCE does the rising morn begin to tread
Upon the mountain tops, and slow-pac'd dawn
Still spreads its doubtful forms upon the depth
Of shade. Ere yet discovery peeps abroad,
And motley crowds pour forth and fill the streets,
I seek unmark'd my home; that home which late
Was peace and honour's humble seat; where days
Unclouded shone, illumin'd by the smiles
Of cheerful innocence: but now, ah! now
Pollution comes, and like the noisome breath
Of pestilence, destroys the blooming face
Of ruddy health! My trembling house foretaste
In apprehension death and threat'ning fate;
Like the weak family of some poor bird,
That see in air the murd'rous falcon sail.
Is shame no more? O Rome! thou boasted seat
Of liberty! canst thou behold such deeds
Unmov'd? do not thy sacred temples nod
And threaten ruin on the head of lust,
That not content to prowl abroad throughout
Thy streets, profanes the secresy of virtue?
Shall tyranny leave no asylum here
For purity to hide its modest head?
Shall rude oppression rule, while humble worth
Scarce dares to look it in the face? Ye gods,
Grant me but means to free my sinking country,
Or fall, if in that cause, a willing victim!
But let me hence—each moment is an hour,
An heavy hour, till Fate her last resolve
Decree; till power or justice shall decide

The day. Ignoble life I scorn, and life
Is death, when fame and freedom are no more. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

VIRGINIUS'S HOUSE.

NUMITOR, VIRGINIA *on a Couch with Attendants.*

(*They watching her.*) *Soft Music.*

Num. How is it now, my dear Virginia! speak?

Virg. Better methinks.—Have I long slept?

Num. Yes, long.

Virg. Kind are thy visits, health-restoring Sleep!

Why sooner com'st thou not at sorrow's call?

I sought thee long ere thou did'st close these lids,

That weigh'd with woe, ask'd thy oblivious hand

Awhile to seal in kind forgetfulness.

Thou lov'st society that courts thee least,

And lay'st thee rudely with plethoric health,

Or labour's well-worn limbs upon the flint,

In willing fellowship. Coy, pleasing friend!

Thou fly'st the cygnet's down, nor on despair

Or madness draw'st thy balmy curtains round.

VIRGINIUS *enters.*

Num. [*beckoning.*] O beware! approach not yet!

Virg. [*rising.*] O yes! approach, my father! give
me my father! [*Rush into each others arms.*]

Vir. My child! my child! Alas! alas! she faints!

Virg. O how this joy o'erwhelms! O blest return!

Dear to my sight as morn to mariners,

Or day to wanderers in trackless wastes.

Vir. Do I once more embrace and call thee mine?

She yet is mine! ye gods, she yet is mine!

Virg. Oh, I could bid thee cease to weep! but then
This bursting grief—My father! oh, my father!

Vir. My child! thou yet art pure?

Virg. And will be ever!

O could I but this hapless face disfigure,
Deformity but court, and sacrifice
At once my sex's dearest pride, that none
May e'er again be tempted to undo me,
Rather than live the victim of dishonour!

Vir. Ye gods! that villain Appius!

Virg. Villain indeed!

Vir. But art thou pure, my dear Virginia? O speak!
Nay, start not so—but truly answer me.

Virg. Pure didst thou say? O heav'ns! what mean'st
thou now?

Vir. Ah, pure in thought! for that is virtue's guard;
With that alone its blest abode it makes.
Did no unguarded look of thine, no loose
Nor thoughtless smile, no giddy flight of thine,
Invite the rude assault? O speak at once!

Virg. And canst thou doubt? O thou art now un-
like

Thyself! O take me to some dungeon dark,
Cold, damp, and deep! Be my abode with toads,
With things both loath'd and venomous. Place me
In houseless climes beneath the burning sun,
Or near the pole in ever-freezing snow;
Let me but find some hut that badly keeps
Th' obtruding tempest out, there let me shiver
With wintry winds. O leave me but my fame,
I shall be blest!

Vir. Thou art indeed my daughter!

Come to my arms!—For Appius, O gracious gods,
Who aid the good, pour that dread vengeance down
Which ye reserve in store for those who sin
'Gainst virtue's laws, and spoil domestic peace!
But haste! let us retire—the hour draws on,
And we have much to think, and much to act.

Virg. That hour, that fatal hour! then we shall part
Again! I shall be torn from thee for ever.
Oh, dread distracted state! what must I suffer?
Sure I have not deserv'd to suffer so!

Vir. Be calm—we will not part; by heav'n we will not!

A father's looks shall check their horrid purpose.

Virg. That hope alone sustains me. But I fear.—

O could I find within the peaceful grave

My rest! for apprehension is moré dread

Than death itself; and in these griefs I find

More bitterness than death could e'er inflict.

Then come, thou certain cure of ev'ry ill!

If life has yet no store of happiness,

Wrap me in silence and eternal peace;

For certain rest is only in the tomb.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

THE FORUM.

Enter APPIUS, CLAUDIUS, Lictors, Guards, People, &c.

App. [*aside to Clau.*] When did Virginius come?

Clau. At early dawn.

App. This is a fatal blow to my fair hopes.

Unless we stand unmov'd, all will be lost.

My evil genius cross'd me when my message

Was by untoward accidents delay'd.

Had I but held the prize, that at the hook

Struggled, I might have now defy'd the fates.

But this delay more heightens expectation.

'Tis my resolve, I will be firm or perish.

Clau. See, they approach.

App. Then stand apart: 'twere best

We should not seem to counsel here. Act thou

As I have taught. Mark well.

Clau. O fear me not!

APPIUS ascends the Tribunal.

Enter VIRGINIUS and VIRGINIA, NUMITOR, ICILIUS, PUBLIUS, LUCIUS, Matrons in mourning, &c.

Lictor [speaks.] Our great Decemvir now ascends the seat.

Of judgment. Come all those who have a suit,
And wait his high and just determination.

Clau. O great Decemvir! wise as great, and good
As wise, I stand thy humble suppliant here
In that unfinish'd claim, which I declin'd
When late unbridled tumult drown'd my voice.
Grant me but justice; all I ask; and thou,
Renown'd Decemvir, know'st its dues and bounds.
At thy right hand it sits. Then deal it forth
As thou art wont, and let men think, as they
Have ever thought, that Appius is most righteous.
Let truth prevail, and falsehood go away
Abash'd, and fly the effulgence of its rays.

Vir. I did not mean to speak as yet; but this,
This daring impudence makes patience mad!
Would stir the passions, though by opiates lull'd!
How dar'st thou, villain! call for justice? How dar'st
Thou talk of truth, and so belie its name?
How dar'st thou look at heaven, smile in its face,
While hell inflames thy heart? How dar'st thou thus
Transform its noblest work? Unseemly vice
Vilely in virtue's spotless dress adorn!
Dost thou not fear the thunder which is mock'd?
Great Jove, I think, will not forbear, but hurl
His vengeful bolts around thine impious head!

App. Intemp'rate man! this fury shall not frown
Our cooler justice from its equal seat.
Be still, and let the honest man proceed.
Speak of thy proofs, declare them all, nor fear.

[To Claudius.]

Clau. I need not dwell on what so well is known,

Which yester-morn was spread to vulgar air,
And floated on the public ear. The proofs
You have all clearly written in this scrawl;
And I have witnesses produc'd, of weight
That must o'ercome all scruple, and so fair
That bold denial dare not disavow.

This virgin was the daughter of my slave:
The childless wife of that Virginius bought
The babe, when newly born, to cheat her lord,
And keep his too inconstant love. Here is
The free confession of the nurse that bought her,
And she was yesterday produc'd. Then hear
Thy suppliant's voice, and let not freedom be
Depriv'd of rights in Rome, the virtuous Rome.

App. This has a face. What canst thou say to this,
Soldier? thou canst not stain this whiteness black.

Vir. What can I say? Oh, I could speak till things
Inanimate gain ear! till senseless graves
Distinguish sounds, and dead men, shaking off
Eternal slumbers, rouse them at my tale!
Till even eloquence itself grow dumb,
And tongues deny their office! See yon maid,
The beauteous image of her mother's face!
Two tears of morn are not more like; their look
The same, that likeness of the speaking mind,
That seems the perfect copy of the soul:
Like too their smiles; when she did smile, a star
Alone of heaven could look so sweet. Nature
In all her works has not more nice resemblance.
Then, Romans, hear! to you I plead: hear me,
O countrymen! Shall we, your soldiers, bleed,
Pour out the heart's full tide, exhaust our veins,
And scar our manly fronts with ghastly wounds?
Shall we look death and horror in the face
For you, and learn to smile at stern destruction?
Shall we affright not slaughter back, and keep
It from your walls? preserve your properties,
Your wives and daughters, from the brutal force
Of fierce invading foes? while here at home
Lust in your absence reigns, and stains our names,

And preys on innocence? If you are men,
Take arms: if you have arms, shew you are men.

Icil. Hear, friends and citizens! thou, Appius, hear!
For I will speak, though all thy lictors frown.

This virgin is betroth'd to me: thy lust
Shall never rob me of her virtuous love,
Nor her of chastity, while I have power
To lift this arm, or voice to call on Rome;
And Rome will hear:—then tremble at its frown.
Thou hast chain'd liberty, but it shall rise,
Rush like an angry lion forth, and, drunk
With blood, waving the thousand snakes that curl
Around its dreadful head, rage uncontroll'd,
Till tyrants fall, and vile oppression die.

App. Romans, attend! you hear this headlong torrent
Of mad ungovern'd rage and furious folly.
It surely speaks the badness of their cause;
For disappointment ever is most clam'rous.
Woman and losers rail. I pass unmark'd
Insults to me, such is my clemency.
Insults to sacred justice thus offend
The majesty of Rome, which lives in me;
And order ends, when tamely magistrates
Rudeness endure. This is the voice of faction,
And they with hot sedition loudly brawl;
Not injury, of which they make pretence,
To smooth the counsels of dark craft.
But, Romans, I am cool, and coolly act:
I have been slow to weigh the cause of justice,
And have to mercy and to right inclin'd;
Thrown every scruple into either scale,
And watch'd the nice vibration of the balance.
Right must prevail, though tender pity weep.
I do believe this virgin may affect
The imputed sire, for intercourse breeds love:
And therefore, while I pass my sentence, tears
Will flow; but though I weep, Justice must still
Be heard; her laws we dare not violate.

Vir. This is my daughter, Appius, whom I betroth'd

To young Icilius, not to thee; betroth'd
To chastity, and not to wicked lust.

Icil. Let all your fury rage on us; we bare
Our breasts; but let our wives and daughters still
Be chaste and free. Here bid your lictors strike!

App. Let clamour rage in vain, stern justice stands
Unmov'd. Claudius, the maid is thine; then take her.

Virg. O great Decemvir, condescend to hear
A virgin's prayer! O may my feeble voice
Take sound's most touching note, steal to thy heart,
And tune it all to sensibility!

Thou call'st thyself the majesty of Rome;
Nay, more, the sacred delegate of gods.
Rome's laws protect her citizens, and gods
Yield pity to a suppliant's prayer. Be like
Them then in that for which men love them most,
And are by them most lov'd. Mercy's the bride
Of Justice: when she sweetly smiles, he sheaths
His mortal sword. Both earth and heaven resound
With joy: for he that utters Mercy's words
Looks more than man, for heaven speaks in his eye,
And light more cheering beams upon his face
Than from the sun. If thou hast never felt
A father's tender love, thou must have heard
From story, or have seen with what a force
The ties of nature hold. Oh, break them not!
Wound not affection; 'tis an eye, all sense.
Dumb creatures mourn to part, and pine asunder.
Then be not thou alone inexorable!

O say what chord can vibrate with thy soul!
Here will I kneel and weary thee with prayer,
Till stern denial melt and turn to kindness.

App. Virgin, my tears have prov'd that I can feel;
Yet be it never said that Appius fails
In what is due to truth.—Lictors, attend!

Vir. By all the gods, ye shall not now approach her!

App. Shall faction dare the majesty of Rome?
Lictors, make way; let Claudius take his slave.

Virg. Save me, my father! have me now, Icilius!

[The Lictors separate them.]

Icil. Unhand me, villains!

Virg. Oh, I have lost ye both! who now shall shield
Me from the force of brutal violence?

Save me, ye gods! O Romans, Romans, save me!

Vir. Hear, Appius! hear one word! Since we must
part,

Grant me to take a short, a last farewell!

To drop from clouds of grief the swelling rain!

'Twill greatly ease a fancied father's heart.

App. Never severe, though just, I do consent.

Virg. [*they approach.*] Thus met again! thus will I
clasp thee round,

As firm as ivy clothes the knotted oak!

Sure Nature prompts herself to call thee sire;

Nor shall they rob me of that dearest name,

For, oh! I feel these ties, that sweet affection,

That ne'er can err! 'Tis Nature works within:

I feel, I feel it shrill and triumph here.

Vir. This bosom answers to thy beating heart.

Affliction works in every vein. A tide

Of love, of sense, that must be truth itself,

Flows from my full, my bursting heart!

Come then, my child! for by that darling name

Once more I glory thus to call thee mine!

But haste, our time is short, and we must weep

A summer's rain, which has not long to stay.

Virg. Is there no way, no single way, to save me?

Vir. There is, if thou canst dare.

Virg. Oh, I can dare

Ten thousand thousand deaths, would that preserve!

Death has no form so horrid as pollution.

Vir. Why then, my child, this parting kiss! and
thus— [*Draws a dagger and stabs her.*]

Virg. [*falls.*] I bless thee for the blow! my father
still

Thou art, and I am still thy daughter; still pure

To thee, my sire, and chaste to my Icilius.

App. Oh, bloody deed!—

Icil. O heav'ns! what hast thou done?

Virg. Farewell to both!—the shades of gloomy night

Fall on these eyes, and steal ye from me fast.

Soon shall we meet—to be for ever blest.

[Dies.

Vir. [raising the dagger.] See, tyrant! what I dare
for honour's cause!

Thy hated life shall pay me for the loss!

And by this blood, to the infernal gods

I here devote thee!—Madness, spare this brain!

Oh, I could weep! but that there is no time

For idle tears.—To its last drop thy heart

Shall weep for this, a father's dread resolve!

[Exit, followed by Numitor, Publius, and Lucius.

App. Sedition is abroad! hence, let us crush
The dang'rous ugly monster at its birth.

[Exeunt App. and Clau.

Icil. Stung as I am, impatient to avenge

My wrongs, yet let me pause a moment here;

Pay the last debt of love, and weep for ease.

Then shall vain-wasting tears be dried,

And only fury fill my tortur'd soul!

Ah! lovely maid! where is that virgin bloom,

Which blush'd so sweetly o'er the vermil cheek,

That all in nature else surpass'd? Ah, flown!

As evening's glow to pale-eyed twilight yields.

Yet in destructive death still art thou lovely!

Sweet is that smile that sits upon thy lips,

And stays behind, to tell how happy was

Thy parting hour! Severe indeed thy lot!

But, ah! severer mine, who vainly live

A spoil'd and empty mourner of thy fate!

Oh! I had form'd such hopes of bliss with thee

As all our days and years could ne'er exhaust!

Oh! I had vainly view'd reflections fair

On the calm sea of hope, and dreamt delight;

But while I gaz'd upon the watry pictures,

Sudden there came a breeze, and they were gone.

Farewell! this kiss is all;—another yet:

For ever now farewell! Softness, away!

Come, fierce resolve, and steel my soul! But hark!

[Going, a shout and tumult heard.

Enter PUBLIUS.

Pub. Where art thou now, Icilius? All Rome is storm,
And uproar rages; order is no more;
The people clamour, and in their fury seiz'd
The vile Decemvir, whom they hold in durance.

Icil. Is he then fallen at length? I joy to hear it!
Now will I fly and triumph o'er the traitor.

Enter LUCIUS.

Luc. A moment stay, my brother! 'tis too late
For living triumph now; he is no more.

Icil. Now, poor Virginia! now art thou satisfied.
How did he die?

Luc. When by the populace
To prison borne, and mock'd with all contempt,
His haughty spirit could not brook the change
Of falling fortunes: loudly cursing gods
And men in rage, he fell upon his sword.

Icil. Just is his fate. But let us haste from hence—
Let private sorrow yield to public good,
And only Rome engross our present care. [*Exit.*]

Luc. Hapless Virginia! oft shall thy mournful story
Be told with many a tear to future ages.
From thee henceforth let virgins learn to prize
The jewel virtue, brighter than their eyes,
Worth to their charms the brightest lustre gives;
Lives when those fade; still bright'ning, shines and lives.
May all usurpers learn from Appius' fate
The many ills that flow from public hate.
Blest is the prince who in the heart can reign;
His people's love and lasting pow'r maintain:
Their int'rests one, if rightly understood:
A sov'reign's highest bliss is public good.
By winning mildness more than force to sway
Those hearts who not from fear but love obey.

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THE END.

This TRAGEDY was performed by the Author's Pupils to a crowded audience in the Theatre at Plymouth, who were pleased to approve, and to solicit its publication.

It was exhibited a second time for the Benefit of the PLYMOUTH PUBLIC DISPENSARY of Medicine, and Medical Aid, to the Poor, and for other charitable purposes, and produced a large sum. On this occasion the Author wrote the annexed ADDRESS, which was spoken, and is printed also by request.

THE ADDRESS.

YE blooming fair! adorn'd with every grace,
Whose eyes give lustre to this splendid place!
And ye kind friends! whose partial favour pays,
This night, the sterling gold of valued praise!
Once more to me your kind indulgence lend;
Though I may seem too moral, yet attend.
But why should I or frown or censure fear
From those whom soft compassion places here?
'Tis charity and worth your favours now invite,
'Tis virtue consecrates this happy night.

Heart-felt Benevolence sits placid here,
Soother of care, and soft'ner of each tear.
All hail, thou cheering sun of mental life!
Whose smiles dispel the gath'ring clouds of strife;
Before thy genial wide-expanding day
The cheerless shades of grief flee fast away.
When wretched man, with gloomy care oppress,
Seeks through this dreary vale of woe for rest,
Around though fear and doubt their shadows roll,
And wrap in awful gloom his sinking soul,
Thy sudden beam can bid of hope to taste,
And light with gladness all the dreary waste;
Where cheerless horrors reign, thy transient glow
Bids new-born verdure spring, and blossoms blow;
Health sudden bursts from all the changing ground,
Fresh verdure springs, and fountains murmur round.

Of all the ills o'er poverty that reign,
The tyrant Sickness brings the darkest train:
For on his steps famine with pain attends;
This racks the limbs, and that the bosom rends.
Disease, that turns e'en luxury to woe,
Here will its deepest tints of darkness throw.
Against this foe no care can e'er secure,
The stroke that even temp'rance must endure:
The traitor lurks all speciously fair,
And spreads his viewless wings in liquid air.
The fall'n to aid, to succour the distress,
A gen'rous wish elates the feeling breast:
An institution aims, with healing art,
To soothe the pangs that touch the sick'ning heart.
With this blest aid the sufferer feels the glow
Of heaven-born Pity lessen every woe:

Pity, that smooths of pain the thorny bed,
While from her wings the healing balms are shed;
And wretches from the couch of dark despair
Leap with new life, and sport away their care.
But e'en where baffled Art cannot avail,
And Heaven decrees that med'cine shall not heal,
Still Mercy glads; still mental pangs decrease,
And Kindness to the dying whispers peace.
As o'er the lamp of life the quiv'ring fire
Grows brighter ere its latest flame expire,
So, pity-fed, the dying soul awhile
Beams a last joy, retiring in a smile.
Life's dearest charities, unbought by state,
Oft fly the gilded mansions of the great:
These never-venal joys are doom'd to cheer
The lowest state of misery severe,
And in the cot disdain not to appear. }
Affection, thrust from riot's noisy door,
Sits tranquil round the fire-hearth of the poor.
Then think what joys this lib'ral night may give,
What sorrows soften, and what cares relieve!
Ye feeling mothers! who in fond embrace
Press the dear babe, and eye the blooming face!
Ye tender wives! in happy wedlock blest,
Who soothe your cares upon the faithful breast!
And you, to whom expressive love imparts
The sweet, the purest interchange of hearts!
All feel with me! what fancy draws receive,
And in your bosoms let th' impression live.
See, in dark melancholy's sad'ning room,
Denied pure air, and wrap'd in dungeon gloom,
A Father stretch'd upon the bed of pain!
While all around a family complain!

Want haggard stares upon the straw-form'd bed,
 Where wretchedness reclines the fainting head!
 The anxious wife counts every heart-felt groan,
 Sighs to each sigh, and answers every moan.
 Her children, ah! upon that bed they lie!
 Struck by contagion, helpless, see, they die!
 The innocents divide unwearied care,
 Redouble all her cries, and madden her despair!
 No cheering comfort graciously descends;
 In vain she calls for help, in vain for friends:
 In vain the father rolls his heavy eye
 To look for consolation beaming high.
 Oh, heav'ns! and is no pitying bosom near?
 Yes! rapturous sight! O yes! I view it here.
 I see the bounteous crowd all emulative round;
 I hear compassion's blest and soothing sound.
 Yes, it is yours the child of want to save,
 And snatch the sinking victim from the grave:
 The circling joys of vigour to restore,
 And cheer the dark horizon of the poor:
 To spread calm bliss, beneficence employ,
 And swell the scanty rill of humble joy.
 And when you seek this night your wonted rest,
 Benevolence shall make your slumbers blest:
 Conscience sweet roses o'er your pillows shed,
 And wakeful virtue's guardian wings outspread,
 To watch, to save from each nocturnal foe,
 Those who to purchase blessings wealth bestow.

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